

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

June 16, 2005

The Honorable Michael Johanns
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

I write to urge you to take immediate action to assist farmers in North Dakota who are likely to suffer severe economic losses as a result of excessive rainfall and flooding over the past three weeks. In many instances, farmers will be prevented from planting not only the crop that they originally intended to seed, but also a substitute crop because of excess moisture conditions. Those who were able to plant a portion of their acreage are likely to lose the production of those crops due to the persistence of standing water on recently seeded fields.

Specifically, I request that:

- 1) The disaster designation process be expedited for those counties that have suffered excessive rainfall and flooding.
- 2) The Farm Service Agency be directed to make timely farm measurement services a priority in the affected areas to speed up the process for filing and settling crop insurance claims for both prevented planting and insured crop losses.
- 3) The Risk Management Agency provide a reasonable level of leniency concerning the 10 percent margin of error on acreage reports for prevented planting.
- 4) You implement a program to allow for an advance payment of a portion of the estimated prevented planting indemnity to provide immediate resources to farm families affected by the excessive rainfall and flooding.
- 5) The Risk Management Agency extend the final crop acreage certification date for at least 10 days beyond June 30, 2005. This will allow producers the flexibility and opportunity to complete any late planting and fieldwork without being forced to spend valuable time completing crop insurance paperwork.
- 6) You relax the "conflict of interest" provisions of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation's Standard Reinsurance Agreement. This will allow producers the opportunity to work directly with their agents to file claims documentation, provide required claims information to insurance loss adjusters and obtain advice concerning the claims process and level of indemnification. Agents should still be precluded from participating in the actual loss adjustment process while allowing flexibility to provide service to their customers during this emergency situation.
- 7) USDA coordinate its disaster authorities and evaluation expertise with those of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and private insurance providers to

streamline the delivery of assistance for farm production losses as well as for home and building damage located on farms and in rural communities.

- 8) You expedite the process for making applicable conservation programs available to the affected producers and communities to assist them in mitigating erosion losses, providing debris removal, re-establishing buffer strips and all other measures deemed appropriate to protecting and rebuilding the natural resource base of the region.

Mr. Secretary, I urge you will take every action possible to address the emergency that now exists in North Dakota.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these issues. Please know I stand ready to assist and support your actions to provide meaningful assistance to the citizens of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kent Conrad", with a stylized, sweeping underline.

KENT CONRAD
United States Senate